

## Salmon need to be stocked for salmon, not fishermen

Follow [@DeltaWatch](#) on Twitter

Fishery management practices in California have been focused too much on meeting the short-term demands of fishermen and not enough on conservation of the affected fish populations, according to a [recent study](#) funded through an appropriation from Congress to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The study was prepared by the California Hatchery Scientific Review Group, which includes representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and California Department of Fish and Game, along with a number of independent experts.

The study examined hatchery management practices and found, among other things, that the trucking of hatchery fish through the Delta in order to avoid pollution and predation, is actually hurting the native salmon populations. Since hatchery salmon that are trucked do not have to navigate the path out to the ocean, they become far less likely to find their way back to their native tributaries to spawn later in life. Fewer spawning wild salmon result in an increased reliance on hatchery populations. It has been well documented that the lack of biological diversity in hatchery salmon can be detrimental to the long-term viability of salmon populations, due to their susceptibility to changing environmental conditions and disease.

Fishermen advocate the trucking of hatchery salmon to maximize ocean harvest from year to year. The simple fact is they ignore that trucking is creating an unsustainable salmon fishery. An end to the trucking program would bolster salmon populations over the long term, but fishermen put their short term economic gain over the needs of their prized and valued catch. Dick Pool, a board member of the

Golden Gate Salmon Association, may have exaggerated that point when he told [the Sacramento Bee's Matt Weiser](#), "Until the Delta and some of the other major (habitat) problems are fixed, we're out of business if trucking is stopped."



**...many fishermen are far more concerned about next season's catch than conservation of wild salmon...**

But fishermen also stand in the way of solving those other "major problems." Plans to reduce predation by the Delta's non-native striped bass, which Department of Fish and Game experts estimated may consume

upwards of 25-50 percent of winter- and spring-run Chinook salmon, were lambasted by fishermen, including Pool's Golden Gate Salmon Association, earlier this year. Ultimately, the Fish and Game Commission chose to side with the fishermen and reject a new management plan for striped bass recommended by experts from the Department of Fish and Game, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and supported by the Delta Stewardship Council.

Oftentimes, people presume that the interests of fish and fishermen are aligned. But, many fishermen are far more concerned about next season's catch than conservation of wild salmon populations. What is best for fish is not the same as what is best for short-sighted fishermen by any means. Protecting a non-native predator at the expense of endangered native salmon is a clear example of putting the wishes of fisherman above the interests of California's native fish populations, which the Fish and Game Commission is charged to protect.

California should take into consideration the recommendations made by the experts in this latest study, but it will take courage and leadership by the state's fish and wildlife managers to make the necessary changes in policy.



# Delta Watch

**A Project of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta**